

(a) a cannula having an end which is insertable through a laparoscopic incision in the patient's body;

(b) an inflatable balloon coupled to the cannula, the balloon being inflatable to a shape suitable for the laparoscopic surgical procedure and the anatomical region of the patient's body in which the balloon is to be used, where the shape of the balloon allows the inflation of the balloon to cause a non-uniform dissection of tissue, wherein the balloon has a distal portion and a proximal portion, where the diameter, volume or perimeter of the balloon when inflated generally decreases from the proximal portion towards the distal portion of the balloon; and

(c) a lumen which provides access to the interior of the balloon for inflating the balloon with a fluid.

2. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the balloon shape varies along a longitudinal axis wherein upon inflation, the balloon causes the non-uniform dissection of tissue in that a characteristic of the dissection is not identical throughout the dissection.

3. (Amended) The apparatus of claim [1] 2 wherein the balloon shape varies along a longitudinal axis wherein upon inflation, the balloon causes the non-uniform dissection of tissue in that the characteristic of the dissection is the amount of the dissection.

10. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the balloon has a tapered portion, the tapered portion having a distal portion which is [small enough upon inflation]

B2
adapted to dissect tissue upon inflation near the patient's ankle.

B3
17. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a handle coupled to the cannula, the handle comprising a first section and a second section, the first section of the handle permitting removal of a first part of the apparatus from inside the patient's body and the second section of the handle permitting removal of a second part of the apparatus from inside the patient's body.

21. (Amended) An apparatus for dissecting tissue to facilitate a laparoscopic surgical procedure in a patient's body comprising:

B4
(a) a cannula having an end which is insertable through a laparoscopic incision in the patient's body;

(b) a balloon mounted to the cannula, the balloon having a distal portion and a proximal portion, where the diameter, volume or perimeter [of the distal portion of] the inflated balloon [is smaller than the diameter of] generally decreases from the proximal portion towards the distal portion of the balloon; and

(c) a lumen which provides access to the interior of the balloon for inflating the balloon with a fluid.

23. (Amended) A method of providing access to an anatomical structure in an anatomical region within a body, the method comprising the steps of:

B5
(a) providing an apparatus including a cannula, an inflatable balloon having a longitudinal axis and shaped for use in the anatomical region, wherein the balloon has a distal portion and a proximal portion, where the diameter, volume or